ABC News - Harris Survey

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HENRY KISSINGER STILL RECEIVES POSITIVE RATINGS AS SECRETARY OF STATE DESPITE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING HIS RECORD IN OFFICE

By Louis Harris

With the publication of his first book of memoirs and the continuing controversy surrounding his record in office, Henry Kissinger continues to be rated 66-28 percent positive by Americans on the job he did as Secretary of State and international security adviser to the White House.

However, by a clear-cut 56-32 percent, a majority rejects the notion that "if the Republicans win the race for president in 1980, Henry Kissinger ought to be Secretary of State again." People seem to feel that although Kissinger once served the nation well, it would be a mistake for him to be placed in a similar position under a new administration.

According to the latest ABC News - Harris Survey of 1,500 adults nationwide, Americans recognize the contributions made by Kissinger, while also acknowledging his shortcomings.

The positive aspects of the Kissinger record stand out clearly:

--By 70-18 percent, a majority acknowledges that "he was a highly skilled negotiator, especially in dealing with the Communists."

--By 66-21 percent, a majority also feels that "he did a remarkable job in opening up diplomatic relations with China, avoiding crises with the Russians, and in getting a cease-fire in the war between the Arabs and Israel." Thus, Americans continue to be full of praise for Kissinger's key foreign policy achievements.

The criticisms of Kissinger are found in the following areas:

--By 54-24 percent, a majority agrees with the claim that "there is still a real question about how much he was involved in the wiretapping of his associates and the illegal wiretapping and spying that the CIA and the FBI engaged in during the Nixon administration."

--By 52-34 percent, a majority also feels that Kissinger "took a lot of gambles and risks with world agreements without checking with Congress or the president, or even the State Department, which was wrong." In 1975, while he was still in office, a much closer 44-37 percent plurality felt that way. In retrospect, Americans seem to have become increasingly concerned about Kissinger having taken too much authority on himself during his time in public office.

--By 48-22 percent, with a high 30 percent who are not sure, a plurality of Americans feels that "he has not told the truth about the secret bombing of Cambodia during the Vietnam War." Recently, British journalist William Shawcross wrote "Sideshow," a book based on official United States papers obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. In the book, Shawcross accuses the former Secretary of State of personally taking charge of the bombings in Cambodia during the Vietnam War and then covering them up in many of the official records. Kissinger has denied the allegations, but many of the doubts raised by Shawcross linger on.

Clearly, people feel that Kissinger's achievements are much more important than his failings. Yet there is general agreement among all groups that Kissinger should not serve again as chief of foreign policy matters if a Republican is elected president next year. Apparently, Americans feel that any future Kissinger has in public service should take another form, or that he should pursue his career in private life. By 52-37 percent, even Republicans reject the idea of his serving as secretary of State in another GOP administration. Three out of four Republicans give Kissinger high marks for his service under Presidents Nixon and Ford, but pluralities in his own party also are concerned about the risks he took without consulting others, the alleged wiretapping of his associates, and his statements regarding the bombings in Cambodia.

(over)

Nonetheless, when Kissinger is compared with his successor at the State Department, Cyrus Vance, only 11 percent of Americans feel that Vance is a better Secretary of State, while a much higher 36 percent feel he is "not as good" as Kissinger. Forty-four percent believe that Vance is "about as good" a Secretary of State as Kissinger was.

Thus, Kissinger is still a highly controversial figure, but one who most Americans feel made substantial and significant contributions to the country's international policies during his eight years in office.

T A B L E S

Between October 24th and 29th, the ABC News - Harris Survey asked a cross section of 1,500 adults nationwide by telephone:

"Looking back at it, how would you rate the job Henry Kissinger did when he was Secretary of State and international security adviser to the White House--excellent, pretty good, only fair or poor?"

KISSINGER JOB RATING

	%
*Positive	66
Negative	28
Not sure	6

*Positive=excellent and pretty good
Negative=only fair and poor

"Let me read you some statements that have been made about Henry Kissinger's record as Secretary of State. For each, tell me if you tend to agree or disagree."

KISSINGER PROFILE

	Agree %	Disagree %	Not sure %
POSITIVE			
He was a highly skilled negotiator, especially in dealing with the Communists			
1979	70	18	12
1975	73	15	12
He did a remarkable job in opening up diplomatic relations with China, avoiding crises with the Russians, and in getting a cease-fire in the war between the Arabs and Israel			
1979	66	21	13
If the Republicans win the race for president in 1980, Henry Kissinger ought to be Secretary of State again			
1979	32	56	12
NEGATIVE			
There is still a real question about how much he was involved in the wiretapping of his associates and the illegal wiretapping and spying that the CIA and the FBI engaged in during the Nixon administration			
1979	54	24	22
He took a lot of gambles and risks with world agreements without checking with Congress or the president, or even the State Department, which was wrong.			
1979	52	34	14
1975	44	37	19

TABLE CONTINUED

KISSINGER PROFILE CONT'D.

	Agree %	Disagree %	Not sure %
He has not told the truth about the secret bombings of Cambodia during the Vietnam War 1979	48	22	30

"How would you compare the job Secretary of State Vance is doing with the job done by Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State--is Cyrus Vance better, not as good, or about as good?"

VANCE VS. KISSINGER AS SECRETARY OF STATE

	%
Better	11
Not as good	36
About as good	44
Not sure	9

Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. subscribes to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls. The principles are that all reports of survey findings of member organizations, prepared specifically for public release, will include reference to the following: sponsorship of the survey; dates of interviewing; method of obtaining the interviews; population that was sampled; size of the sample; size and description of the sub-sample, if the survey report relies primarily on less than the total sample; complete wording of questions upon which the release is based; and, the percentages upon which conclusions are based.

All of this information is provided in this release.

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